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FOR NEA/MAG (HARRIS)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/29/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [TN](#)  
SUBJECT: IS PRESIDENT BEN ALI CLINICALLY DEPRESSED?

REF: A. TUNIS 0055  
[1](#)B. 05 TUNIS 2265  
[1](#)C. 05 TUNIS 2148

Classified By: CDA David Ballard for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S/NF) The state of President Ben Ali,s health has long been a topic of conversation in Tunisia, both among diplomats and in society at large. Reftels reported on President Ben Ali's reported prostate cancer, for which he has sought treatment in Germany and Italy, along with the potential political implications of his illness. Most recently, in a courtesy call with Pol/EconCouns, Italian PolOff opined that, in addition to prostate cancer, President Ben Ali suffers from serious depression.

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Comment: We are used to hearing speculation about Ben Ali's health, but this is the first we have heard about the possibility of a diagnosis of depression. While we cannot confirm this report, we believe that the Italians, having hosted at least one medical visit by Ben Ali, are in a position to speak more credibly than others about his medical condition. End Comment.  
BALLARD